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own expectations. We have the highest authorities to affirm that learning is not so difficult as people often imagine. "It is as easy," says the learned Mr. Harris, "to become a scholar as a gamester, and many other characters equally illiberal and low; the same application, the same quantity of habit, will fit us for one, as completely as for the other." Such are the sentiments of a gentleman of the most refined judgment. His great experience and extensive erudition eminently qualified him to decide the point in question. I cannot conclude without availing myself of a passage from the Spectator, to show of how much greater importance it would be to mankind, that learning should be possessed by men of business than by those whose lives are hidden or retired from the world. "When learning irradiates common life, it is then in its highest use and perfection; knowledge of books in recluse men, is like that sort of lantern which hides him who carries it, and serves only to pass through secret and gloomy paths of his own; but in the possession of a man of business, it is as a torch in the hand of him who is willing and able to show those who are bewildered, the way which leads to their prosperity and welfare." As learning, then, in the opinion of Mr. Addison, a writer whose reputation runs so high in the polite and learned world, is so extremely conducive to the happiness and well-being of the community at large, when possessed by men of trade and business, ought not something be devised to diffuse it among them. It is obvious, that such societies as that suggested by your correspondent would be of the greatest service: the spirit of emulation among young men formed into a body, the communication of ideas, and the other mutual advantages arising from such institutions would very much

facilitate their studies, and consequently expedite their progress.

Although I have already exceeded the limits to which I intended to confine myself, I cannot forbear remarking, that the present state of the Empire seems in a peculiar manner to call for the dissemination of knowledge. The cause of the Catholics, which is justly identified with the cause of the Empire, is supported on the broad basis of enlightened patriotism, sound policy, and true wisdom: and as nothing but science can advance men in those respects, let those sincerely desirous of universal emancipation exert themselves to promote literature. The sun of science will dispel the mists of ignorance and vapours of prejudice; all will view the claims of the Catholics in the same light, unanimity will prevail; the friends of liberty and proselytes to reason may naturally expect to obtain a decisive victory over the *interested and ambitious*, when they shall be opposed by no others; and Ireland, once the nursery of learning, distinguished for every thing great, generous, and noble, will attain to the meridian of her former power and glory.

FILIUS HIBERNÆ.

Waterford, April 26th, 1812.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

INTENDED DEFENCE ON A TRIAL FOR
SEDITION, IN THE YEAR 1794.

My Lords,

IT was not my intention, until very lately, to have intruded on your time, with any vindication or exculpation of myself, but to have resigned the whole of this business to the ability of my counsel, the justice of the jury, and the large discretion of the court, remaining my-

self in the silence of self-approving conscience, satisfied with the simple sincerity expressed in two words—Not Guilty. Yet as this silence is ambiguous, except to God and my own conscience, and may be misinterpreted by enemies, and even by friends, as proceeding from various motives, independent of the real one, which is, in truth, the calm conviction of my own innocence, I shall, therefore, entreat your permission, my Lords, to make a few observations; and I take the liberty of reading them, from a fear of saying any thing irregular or unpremeditated, and from a diffidence which a conscious want of abilities, and the novelty of my present situation naturally inspire, as I have never in the course of my life, more than twice or thrice, entered a court of justice.

It is certain, that the very essence and pith of all criminality consists in the *intention*. It is the will, intention, or mind, with which the thing is done, that ought to be respected as constituting the guilt; for one may fall into error, but no error, in itself, deserves punishment, and a man may be a mistaken zealot, without being at the same time a seditious disturber of the public peace. Allowing the paper to be in its nature libellous, the libellous or seditious intention remains to be proved, and this inward and invisible intention is to be collected and deduced from outward acts, and from concomitant circumstances. As in a written paper, it is not merely one or two imprudent or incautious expressions which should make it be condemned as, in the whole, a seditious libel, without an impartial consideration and comparison of the text and context taken together, so, if a person be accused of having authorized such a publication, with an inten-

tion to disturb the public peace, the proof of that intention ought not to rest on the consideration of a single isolated action, supposing it to be ascertained, but on a fair comparison of what may be called the *context* of that man's life; on its disagreement, or co-incidence with the subject matter of the accusation.

This, therefore, must be my reason and my apology for presuming to speak of myself, as it is necessary to prove, that in speech, in writing, or in action, the only means of revealing the hidden heart, I have been a man the most unlikely to form designs of disturbing the public peace, (for what indeed would become of such an atom as me, in the storm of civil commotion?) and that all my external conduct has branched from the root of a single principle infix'd in my heart, agitating its every pulse, and constituting a part of its very existence—an enthusiastic desire for an equal representation of all my countrymen in their own House of Parliament, with which, I conceive, public morals, public happiness, and public peace, are most intimately connected. Were I not convinced, that nothing very great or very good was ever effectuated without a portion of enthusiasm, and that such a passionate prepossession in favour of a good principle, ought to be freely pardoned or with pity punished, I should have used the term enthusiastic with some apprehension of ridicule, at a time when to behave disinterestedly, wears an appearance of insanity, and to cleave to principles, instead of being complimented as persevering integrity, is a mark of a man being a Jacobin, a madman, or a fool.

A jury is chosen from the vicinage, that an acquaintance with the merits of the case, and the charac-

ters of those concerned, may produce perfect justice from perfect knowledge, but still they are also in the vicinage, I may say the contact of much party prejudice, and elevated as they are, and sitting apart amidst the sanctity of a court of justice, the most holy place upon earth, next to the temple of God, they are still immersed in the foul air of this low world. The same extravagance of a good principle, which may have led the author of that address, in the fervour of the mind, beyond the line of discretion, might lead *them* in the desire equally zealous of keeping down what has been supposed a dangerous faction, to act in the present instance rather from a vague, general, and indiscriminate condemnation of certain principles, than from a calm and impartial scrutiny of the character and conduct of the individual before them. They ought to rise so far above the atmosphere of party, as to look down from the serenity of a clear judgment, and with the sympathy of humanity; to select the particular case; to consider it under all its relations of character, of times, and of circumstances; for, without such discrimination, the office of a jury, in periods like the present, when men and the times are so out of temper, would resemble the movement of a great machine, blind and exceptionless, not a body of men who can pause, and make those allowances for others, which in similar situations they should wish to be made for themselves.

They ought not to reason, in my case, or in any other, from the general objection to the individual instance, from the condemnation of the party to that of the person, without estimating fairly the different gradations, and making grounds of exception, though, on the whole, their principles may have led them

to reprobate and condemn. Round numbers, and general appellations, are equally exaggerating and to be distrusted. Men are generally better than their sect, and the partizan than the party. The conscience of the jury ought to ask itself, how far their dislike of my political principles, how far the desire to put down a party, how far the panic of the times, and how far many other circumstances, collateral and incidental, may tend to bias and seduce their judgment respecting the individual case, and if my life, in the review which it is their duty to make of it, be an innocent life, that must be a reason for distrusting their judgment, on any single act of it being seditious, as that judgment may proceed from the misconception of my intention, seen through the medium of certain political antipathies. The whole of a paper should be taken into consideration, to ground the judgment of it as a libel, and the conclusion of a seditious intention should be drawn from looking at the context of the whole life.

I am the son of an honest man; a minister of that gospel which breathes peace and good will among men; a Protestant dissenting minister in the town of, who has been dead for many years, but who lives, as of yesterday, in my remembrance, to whose gentle and gracious spirit I am accustomed to look up, in every trying situation, as my mediator and intercessor with heaven. He was the friend and associate of good, I may say, great men, of Abernethy, of Bruce, of Duchal, and of Hucheson, and his character of mild and tender benevolence is still remembered by many in the North of Ireland, and by not a few in this city.

I may be imprudent in mentioning, that he was, and that I glory to be, a Protestant Dissenter, obnoxious

as this appellation is at present, in both countries; but my future life would appear to me one continued lie, were I not on this occasion to profess myself one of that division of Protestants who regard no authority on earth, in matters of religion, save the words and the works of its author, and whose fundamental principle it is, that every person has a right, and in proportion to his abilities is under an obligation, to judge for himself in matters of religion; a right, subservient to God alone, not a favour to be derived from the gratuitous lenity of government; a right, the resignation of which produces slavery on the one hand, persecution on the other, and of consequence that disturbance of the public peace, which has so much, and so long distinguished the Christian world.

Such religious principles, founded as they are on the right of private judgment, to be accounted as sacred in others as in ourselves, naturally produce that independence of mind which is the buckler of political as well as private virtue, and has made the Protestant Dissenters in all critical times, the active defenders and guardians of the British constitution; and to the best of fathers, the best of religions, and the best, as I think, of persuasions included in that religion, am I indebted for that veneration of the rights of mankind, which I find to be the true source of personal happiness, because the violation of any right must be the transgression of a duty, and so far must make a man miserable. From the earliest of my school-boy days, from the delightful hours in which I voyaged with the patient, persevering Ulysses, and made *his* country the Ithaca of my wishes; in which I panted through the Greek and Roman story, from those days the love of my coun-

try has been in my breast, not merely a classical image, or a cold principle, but an animating spring of action, and surely, our ancient poets, orators, and historians, would have been long ago placed by some inquisitorial committee in a political "index expurgatorius," and prohibited from the use of youth, were it not hoped, that the bustle of a selfish world would soon brush off such childish ideas, and that the prudence, and caution, and moderation of a premature old age, would keep down, even in manhood, the propensities of nature, and the instinct of liberty.

I have heard, that the first address which Sir Robert Walpole, he who deflowered the British constitution, was accustomed to make to the young men who were sent for to his closet, was, "Well, sir, are you really resolved to continue an old Roman," and on hearing it, I have cursed the public Bawd, whose aim it was to blast the blossoming virtues of the heart, and have blest my own good fortune, that education, habit, small ability, and simple integrity, would always shield me from such seducing connections.

In the year 1778, when the people of Ireland took up arms through necessity, but through public spirit retained them; when the public peace was undisturbed, because the people were armed; when common danger united all ranks whom the feeling of a common country could not unite before, I entered, with ardent zeal, and feeble frame, into the first volunteer association made in this kingdom, and was among the first and among the last in that ever memorable institution, which saved the island from invasion, secured domestic tranquillity, advanced civil liberty, laid the foundation of national independence, and by their liberal resolutions, showed tolera-

tion to be but a mitigated persecution, and taught administration a lesson, which they were soon after obliged to put into practice, viz. that the surest way of guarding the constitution, is to interest as many of all descriptions of religion as is possible, in its preservation. Indeed I associated every thing great and good, every thing most auspicious to the hopes, most connected with the best interests of the country, to an institution which raised every man in it to a higher value, and I wished it to be perpetual, with an ardour which he that has been a Volunteer, might imagine would suggest such an address, (as is the present subject of prosecution,) on the supposed extinction of that body, and which he that has not felt, might excuse in an enthusiastic but not ill intentioned mind.

From the year 1778 to that of 1782 I observed such a line of conduct as might be expected from one who has ever most justly looked on himself most humbly as an individual, but most proudly as an Irishman; and as an Irishman I added one particle to that mass of public spirit which then asserted the exclusive rights, and legislative competency of this imperial island: its distinct dominion, and independent parliament; and I was one of the millions who *then* thought that the truest way of honouring Britain for renouncing her assumption of right, was to proceed in reforming every *internal* abuse that corrupted our constitution. I then thought, and I ever will think, that a more equal representation of the people, was absolutely necessary for their freedom, their virtue, their happiness, and their *peace*; and by exerting myself in my little sphere, by rallying all the powers I possessed, round this central point, I thought that I was practicing the doctrine of *aim who went about doing good con-*

tinually to the poor people, himself poor and lowly; and that I was copying the example of a father who felt for all that lived, particularly for the living mass of humanity.

I thought that the truest way of promoting civil war was to put the people out of conceit with the constitution, by hearing always of its perfections, and feeling only its abuses, until they might come to confound the excellencies of the government with the errors of its mal-administration; and that the truest way for promoting peace was, as in the case of the volunteers, to arm the people for their liberties, so now, to arm them—with their rights, which is the first step in giving them a knowledge of their duties: for until they enjoy the one, they will remain ignorant of the other, and the exclusion which first made, will support the incapacity. The enjoyment of rights implies the performance of duties, and the unequal distribution of the former prevents the discharge of the latter, so that the freedom of the public is necessarily connected with their virtue as well as their happiness. An arbitrary, irregular, and undetermined subordination, not only checks and destroys industry, but is a provocative on the one part to every excess which is natural to the abuse of power without right; and on the other part, to those crimes, and that disturbance of the public peace which the hopelessness of redressing their wrongs begets in ferocious and savage natures; and thus, to the corruptions of our constitution are traceable all the crime as well as misery, of our civil society. I thought I should become an accessory in that crime, as well as a promoter of that misery, if I did not act as a zealous advocate for a reform in parliament; and, as such, fervently desire, that the volunteers should retain the

possession of those arms, which are the prime distinction of freemen; that this energetic establishment, arising from the innate vigour of the citizens, should perpetually exist, as being necessarily connected with that public spirit, in which alone, I saw reason to hope for ultimate attainment of the great object—an adequate and impartial representation.

As my principles in religion were brought from nature and the New-Testament, and as my reasons for being a Protestant-Dissenter were early drawn from a book named "The Dissenting Gentleman's Answer to White;" and afterwards from Blackburne, Furneaux, Priestley, and Price; so my prime authority in politics was "Locke's Essay on Government;" and my authorities for the justice, the expediency, and the necessity of a parliamentary reform, were drawn from the general, I may say, the universal opinion of the deepest reasoners, the most splendid orators, and the best men—from the petitions of 28 out of 32 counties in Ireland—from the concurrent opinion of two meetings, the nature and name of which are now under legal interdiction, the one a delegation of citizen-soldiers, sanctioned by Lord Charlemont, the other a delegation purely civil, where Mr. Sharman presided, both equally inefficacious; from the authorities of persons, in other respects most opposite; from Flood and Grattan; from Fox and Pitt; from the first peers, and the lowest peasants; from the early principles of Richmond, and the purer practice of Burke. At this flame I lighted my taper; it illumined my understanding, warmed my heart, and influenced my conduct; and from 1783 to 1790, during those seven years, I continued to act from principle, and from passion, for a reform, not deeming that the duties of a good citizen,

and a good physician, were at all incompatible; not believing that so liberal a profession should act in this country, as they might have been forced to have done at Rome, where they were chosen from the class and condition of slaves. Were the duties of the profession in all cases to obliterate those of the citizen, there could be no public, but at the moment of election; and however good the rule is, to mind our own business, there are times, when the business of the public is every man's own business, and the personal and general weal are the same.

On coming to this city in the year 1790, I did not relinquish those principles, or alter that mode of conduct, which I thought best suited the character of a good citizen. Sensible that Catholics and Protestants agreed in the essential articles of religious duty, and that though the form and ceremonial may vary as the features of the face, the substance, like the construction of the heart, was in all alike; I co-operated in an union of sects, for the interest of the whole society, and against the dominancy, the political dominancy, of any religious persuasion. I believed the general character of mankind to be less influenced by the excellencies of religion, or injured by its abuses, than the mutual crimination of sects would lead us to imagine—a crimination often built on surmise and conjecture, or on a logic equally disgraceful, which builds the rule upon the exception, and poisons the judgment by pre-conceived impressions. I therefore entered into a society, of which this union of Catholic and Protestant Irishmen was the first stone and base, and a parliamentary reform the sole object and end. Nothing, surely, but the most intimate and heart-felt conviction of right intention, could have kept me attached to a society, which, during all its

political life, has been the object of so much obloquy. Nothing could have supported me under the effects of professional injury, of the desertion of once valued friends, of being deemed an agent in the worst designs, and marked out by the eyes of those whom I met in the streets, as a dark and malignant conspirator; nothing, I say, could have supported me, but that conscious mind, which is its own awful world, and which, I trust in God, will, at this hour, support me, even under the sentence of professional and personal ruin.

I thought it the duty of every good citizen who regarded the peace of Ireland, to cling to the people the more strongly on the very account, that the panic of French principles and French practices, had made not only the upper ranks, but even the men of middling property, who had been accustomed to assimilate with the mass, now forsake and abandon the people, and the cause of the people—a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. I thought it the very time for men to popularise themselves; and that it was most dangerous for men of rank, fortune, and connexions, to stand off, in sullen and suspicious sequestration, and thus make themselves be considered in no other light than as a political party, and a large predominating association, who have been so long accustomed to enjoy the whole constituent, as well as representative power, that their “scorn and horror” is readily excited at “the frenzy, folly, and wickedness” of those who desire any share in the legislation, or in the common rights of humanity. I did not think that it was the charity of individuals, or the munificence of the great which could make the people happy, or keep them in peace. The social intercourse of the higher and lower orders ought not to be sustained solely by charity on the one hand, and bless-

ings on the other, but by an adequate equivalent, given and received, that might make the poor and rich reciprocally *dependent*, and thus endowing every individual, however low, with an exchangeable value, must make the happiness of the community, depend, not on inadequate and intermitting benevolence, but on the action and re-action of self-interest, a principle constant and universal. I thought, (and acted from the thought,) that the enjoyment of the elective right, could alone give this value to every man, and that without it, they may be parties, and classes, and sects, and ascendancies, but there can be no people.

The great object of that society was, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS; and their plan of reform was founded upon the eternal and immutable principle of justice. In repeating and justifying my political creed, I think I am defending myself from the imputation of sedition, by showing, as I can do; that none of these principles travel out of the constitution; but are justified by its philosophy, its practice, and the best authorities; and that all of these principles converge towards the permanent peace and happiness of my country—for, until there be an equality of rights, which it is the end of the social union to realize, and substantiate, there must be a smothered war in civil society. I have appealed to the best constitutional authorities—“To be taxed without being represented,” said Lord Chatham, with the energy of justice, “is contrary to the maxims of the law, and the first principles of the constitution.” As all are taxed, all ought to be represented; and none can be represented who has no power to vote. “Taxation and representation are inseparable,” said Lord Camden. “In a free state,” says

Judge Blackstone, "every man who is a free agent ought to be in some measure his own governor, and therefore, a branch at least, of the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people." Thus, it is a vital principle of the constitution, that the property of the people cannot be granted but by their own consent in person, or by representative; and until the reign of Henry VI., and the act of disfranchisement, which then dispossessed persons, and as it were appropriated the constitution, its PRACTICE also, was built upon personal representation.

The British constitution is a conquest made, at different times, over the feudal system imposed by the first William; but the powers that made this conquest were actuated by party interest, which accidentally rather than intentionally co-operated for the public good. The clergy and the barons combated and repressed the inordinate power of the monarch. But was it done for the good of the people? No! It was for the privileges of their noble rank, or for the safety of their sacred order. When commerce diffused property, a new resistance rose, to the accumulation of power, made by the clerical and aristocratical factions. But was this resistance less selfish, though equally successful? No! The victories of these commons were the victories of sectaries not of society, of parties not of the people, of the proprietary interest, rather than of the general weal. Looking upward, the party is always for the people. Looking downward, they begin to vilify and abuse them. They are "the refuse and scum of the earth—mob—swine—sturdy beggars—of no value in the eye of God," and any society who defends their cause is denominated "a blasted Jacobin society—wicked and vicious—

the advocates of white-boys,—scavengers—defenders—felons—paupers—and of Channel-row." The clergy maintained their order against the King: the nobles their rank against the clergy and King: the commons, their privileges against the clergy, nobles, and King: and the people are now to maintain their personal rights against the propertied and privileged community, including commons, clergy, nobles and King.

The philosophy of the constitution, which is nothing else than the improvement of human reason, concurs in proving that men alone can be represented, but not land or money; that property does not confer any exclusive right to be represented; and that poor men with an equal right have more need to be represented than the rich. Those rights which the social union confirms and substantiates, are founded on *personality* alone, and since they are inherent in the nature of man, as man, they can never yield to, or be extinguished by any acquired rights, such as property, which is a thing not natural, but incidental, which may or may not belong to a man, and which has no necessary connexion with either a good conscience, or a good understanding. When the right of property, which was comparatively late in its establishment, no longer confines itself to its own security, but lays a claim to dominion and ascendancy over the *anterior* rights of nature, converts persons into things, and men into cattle; the intention of the social union seems to be defeated, and the land subjugates the inhabitants. Even on the supposition, that property is the rule of representation, the mass of property, the great fund of productive taxation rests with the mass of the people, and though scattered into minute portions, is not less real, and

ought to be as really represented as when cumulated in the hands of the comparative few.

"To give the mass of property, commercial and landed, the whole of the return of members to serve in parliament," is, in effect, to form the propertied community into one great corporation, whose end it may be, to league together, and combine their whole influence, against the population of the country, "a proprietary influence," which, however applauded, is, *at best*, but a conspiracy between two classes of people—the landholders and tenantry; against the intendment of the constitution; a collusive traffic of franchise and private judgment, which the rich buy and the poor sell. It appears to me, that the fluctuation which attends property is of itself, a proof how absurd it is to base the rights of man on a bottom so unstable, and still more so, to draw circles around places as if to encompass or confine a quality so fugitive, and to seat the genius of the constitution on the still revolving wheel of blind and capricious fortune, and hence, proceeding as far with a good principle as it would lead me, I thought it my duty as a man, to advocate the equality of rights, a political equality, perfectly consistent with civil distinctions; and to reprobate any plan of reform which pets and cherishes portions of the community; to interest them in abuses; and to irritate the remainder by invidious comparisons; which, by attaching the oldest inheritance of the whole people to certain round spots of earth, gives a locality to liberty, inconsistent with its nature: turns legislators into land-measurers, and land-measurers into legislators, and extending lines of demarcation, on one side of which, privilege is heaped up, and on the other, common right trodden down; piling in with pieces of packthread, the liberality

of the constitution; and circumscribing, with boroughmonger authority, the principles of eternal justice.

This outline of my life, made up, as I presume to think, of pure intentions, and honest principles, tending to maintain the rights of man, his dignity, his tranquillity, and his happiness, appears to me as a volume of circumstantial evidence against the charge, however positive, of having written or published a single paper with seditious intention; and in acknowledgment, that, as a citizen, I wish to strengthen the popular order of the government, the democratic or republican part of the constitution, actively persevering in a pursuit, which most of the choice and master spirits of the age have, I think, shamefully abandoned, seized with a panic that has congealed their principles. I do not think it any sign of sedition to have been proof against that panic—and to have felt the influence of what I should call a rational panic, a panic which leads me to dread the *Jacobite* more than the *Jacobin*, and the revival of those doctrines of passive obedience, non-resistance, and epidemic Toryism, which produced one revolution, and may provoke another. If *that* panic be not accounted seditious, which drives men not only to abandon all exertions to rectify those abuses by which the constitution may have been perverted, but to countenance and connive at the violations it may have suffered, by their torpid acquiescence, passive concurrence, and strenuous inactivity, if *that* panic be founded on legal and constitutional principles, which has led these men to outrage the wretchedness of the people, (who though decried as dirt, are yet like the earth on which they tread, the great pabulum of luxury, and enjoyment,) by base allusions, and contumelious appellations, and by the low estimation thus set upon

them, to sink them still lower in self-estimation, and drive them to abandonment and despair; is not *that* opposite panic as well founded, and as little allied to sedition, which makes me dread the effects of this terrible estrangement taking place between the upper and lower orders of society; which makes the wish of arbitrating and mediating between them, of averting their rude and revolutionary collision, by a reform of reason and accommodation; and of holding out that torch of instruction which may guide the infatuated rich, as well as the uninformed poor, in the just medium between their rights and their duties? Or is it to be construed into any intention of disturbing the public peace, if, on beholding the approaching extinction of an institution, which had raised this country from a state of brutal ferocity, and was advancing it to a perfect civilization, I should have addressed the Volunteers, in the fervour and in emphasis of the heart, and in terms, the mere shade or faint reflexion of what had been said by the most illustrious men: O memory of Grattan! let those words that made our hearts burn within us at the time, shield us now from the charge of sedition.

"The Irish constitution, commerce, and power, with you began, and with you, they would vanish. You are the great charter of the nation, our efficient cause, and our final hope. Obnoxious for your virtue, you are to confirm your advocates, and to preserve your associations, the dreaded instrument of national deliverance. Believe me, you have many enemies, and you are to guard against false friends and national foes, against the weakness of human nature, and the depravity of man, against sloth, against security, against administra-

tion, against a *militia*. I have heard your legality disputed. Conscious as I am that as no law prohibits the subject to arm, convinced as I am of your legality, I conceive that question to be lost in the immensity of your numbers, and with the pomp, and power, and trade, and all that train which await your progress, I shall not stop your army to ask what law has made you,—sufficient, that here is no law against you—sufficient, that without you there could be neither law nor liberty! *Go on*, and prosper, thou sword of Justice, and shield of Freedom—the living source of an ancient flame—the foundation of our pride—a providential interposition—an army enriching the land with industry, costing the state nothing, adequate to all her enemies, and greater than all her revenues could pay. Awful, indeed, to the tyrant, but to the just prince unconquerable strength. The custody of the nation's character is in your hands—*Go on*, and multiply, and add immortal security to the cause of your country."

Are not such awakening words hallowed in our remembrance, and is the faint echo of such sentiments to be now halloo'd at, as the rankest sedition, once rewarded with a popular pension, and now punished with fine and a prison? But the times are changed—alas! 'tis very true. Yet what are the times? The Sun still makes the seasons, and the earth produces the harvest, but it is the change in *men's* dispositions which *unmake* the times, for truth is still the same, and rests on the base of its own immutability. Because men of station and abilities fell, at one time, into the ranks of the people, from mere panic, and in order to preserve their "proprietary influence," and at another time, from another panic, have forsaken that very institution which they had so

warmly patronized, and reproach and vilify it for the very effects which their own abandonment had occasioned, was it sedition in a man to stand undisturbed by panic of the one kind, or panic of the other, on a firm and sound-set principle, that in an armed people lies the best security for public peace, and does he deserve a jail for reverencing and thinking well of, and hoping much from the people in their lowest abasement; still recognizing in the tenant of the meanest hovel, the capability of human nature, and in the veriest wretch over whom he stumbles in the streets, deploring the victim of a corrupted public constitution?

With respect to this address to the Volunteers of Ireland, a paper raised from its intrinsic insignificance, by serving as a plausible pretext for repeated prosecutions, I do think there is an honest physiognomy, which indicates on its face the simple sincerity of the heart which dictated it. Let any man place himself, if he can, at an impartial distance from the paper, and he would characterize it as the hurried effusion of an enthusiastic mind, the general tenor of which was well-intentioned, but with some rash and imprudent expressions, probably arising from the difficulty of separating what was meant to be energetic, from what was really inflammatory; a composition which was easily pervertable to purposes unthought of by the author; a perversion which might be made by opposite parties, the one to obtain an instrument for sedition, the other to find a subject for prosecution, and thus the innocent author might become the dupe of inconsiderate friends, or the prey of watchful enemies. Though the paper may have been adjudged a libel, it may have been written without any libellous or seditious intention, and

that may have been distributed with an intention of exciting commotion, which the writer certainly meant as a preservative of the public peace. The best intentions are liable to be abused; the best purposes perverted; and things written with the most pure and sincere heart, have been conjoined with the worst actions. Men have taken the Gospel in one hand, and the sword in another, and the word of the Scottish rebels, under Montrose, was, "*Jesus, and no quarter!*"

The subject matter of this prosecution is now a year and a half old. I will not presume to ascribe any improper designs in bringing it forward so long after the publication, and at this very invidious time, when plot and treason is so much talked of, that an innocent man may be prejudged even by a supposed implication in crimes, of which others have been accused; but if I, as the supposed author of this paper, had any designs of disturbing the public peace, it is strange, that they should not, in all this time, have manifested themselves in some other *overt acts*; that sedition did not go on into treason; and as there has been nothing of that kind produced by the ingenuity and vigilance of the crown lawyers, it is to me a strong presumptive proof, that I was as little seditious at the period of the publication, as I appear to have been both before and after it, and thus my whole life (*a parte-post*, as well as a *parte-anti*) seems to me a cumulation of evidence against the individual charge of sedition.

With respect to the informer in this prosecution, I can scarcely think it possible, that conviction could be grounded on a *single* evidence, so notoriously influenced by a malicious mind, with vengeance on his tongue on all occasions, and virulence distilling from his pen, even during the pendency of the prosecution; but I

have a pride in hating personalities, and leaving the commentary on such character to others, I can only exclaim with Brasidas, when a rat seized him by the hand, that the most contemptible creatures acquire a portion of respect from their danger—"Although I have not the power to shake off the viper which came out of the heat, and to remain free from harm," I am able, thank God, so far to overcome an instinctive moral antipathy, as to acquiesce in the philosophical opinion, that such creatures, however odious to sense, are in the order of nature, and that there is a use in all things most venomous, though we are not able to find it out. But though I can view this being, swollen into dangerous significance, as a philosopher contemplates some reptile magnified in the field of his microscope, yet I cannot help lamenting, that it should ever be necessary in any government, to foster a set of informers, and to place them as Locusta was in the days of Tiberius, "inter instrumenta regni." I should have thought, that an argument very commonly adduced by modern as well as ancient Italian policy, would never have found an advocate in this land. "Egli è un huomo honesto, ma *La Ragonia di Stato* rai-chiede cho sia punito."

My Lords, I have spoken with the assurance of innocence, and, I hope, without audacity. My defence rests on the *purity of Motive*, and that purity may be deduced from the character of my conduct, and the consistency of my life. That little life has been rounded by a single benevolent principle, the object of which was to serve my country as far as I could serve her, in promoting a reform in Parliament; and as a means for this object, to elevate the public to a knowledge of their rights, and their du-

ties, and to perpetuate an institution which contributed to this high information. That the constitution was imperfect, as all the works of man are, it cannot be seditious to suppose, but that it can reform *itself*, or contains in *itself* a principle of rejuvenescence, I do not believe; or that those will ever contribute to its rectification, who are most interested in its abuses. The wish of every lover of peace and his country, is not to rend, but to renovate; not to ruin, but to restore; not to anarchize, but to cement and consolidate, and that wish must look for its completion, not to this or that individual, not to a propertied community, not to a pusillanimous gentry, not to an interested opposition, not to a venal city, not to the rashness of a mob, but to the CONSTITUTIONAL INTERPOSITION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE.

If I am to suffer, I hope to do it with patient equanimity, not the less sensibly feeling the horror of imprisonment, and the prospect of professional and most probably personal ruin.

June, 1794.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON FRIENDSHIP.

MAN is a being formed for society, and is incapable of happiness in any other state. When separated from his fellows, he is like a plant torn up by the root, which soon droops and decays. Society it is that can alone raise him to the dignity of a useful and happy being, for though occasional solitude may be favourable to the production of some virtues, continual seclusion from our fellow-creatures, is inimical to the exercise of almost all.

Independence of mind is indeed necessary, but it is an independence